

THE
W A Y
TO
ETERNAL SALVATION

Plainly pointed out.

By *EDWARD*, Lord Arch-
Bishop of T U A M.

One Thing is needful. Luk. x. 42.



D U B L I N:

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Advertisement.

IN *this short Discourse, I have endeavour'd to bring the noblest Argument, that can employ the Mind of Man, within a small Compass; and yet to set it in a clear Light. Nor shall I make any other Apology for the Publication of it; but only that I hope it may be of good Use, at least to such as want Money to buy, or Leasure to read larger Volumes upon the same Subject.*

(3) every Capacity

THE
WAY
TO
Eternal Salvation, &c.

I T H E S S. V. 21.

Prove all Things: Hold fast that which is good.

AT the twelfth Verse of this Chapter, the Apostle lays down certain Rules of Christian Piety, in distinct Sentences; having no Occasion to connect them one with the other. Of these Sentences my Text is one of very great Concern to us all (as we shall presently see) and therefore carefully to be look'd into.

Prove all Things, says the Text: Under which Expression we are not to include the Affairs and Business of this World. For al-

tho', in Prudence, a Man ought to make some *Proof* even of such Things as these, before he engages himself in them; yet these are not the Things of which St. *Paul* is here speaking, but only of the Things of Religion; the Things upon which our eternal Salvation depends: These are the Things which he directs us to try, examine, and *prove*.

Again; *Hold fast that which is good*, says the Apostle. By *that which is good* he means only that which is agreeable and conformable to the Will of God, which, in Matters of Religion, is the only Rule of good to us. To the same Purpose he speaks, *Rom. xii. 2.* where he directs us to *prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect Will of God.* Also *Eph. v. 8. Walk as Children of Light, proving what is acceptable to the Lord*, and ver. 17. *Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is.*

From the Text, thus explained, these two Propositions most evidently arise.

First, That it is the Duty of every Man to search, examine, and inquire into Matters of Religion, until such Time as he finds it *proved*, to the Satisfaction of his Conscience, what the Will of God is, which he stands obliged to perform and fulfil.

Secondly, That when he is convinced what the Will of God is, he ought to *hold fast* to it, and by no Means to depart from it. *Prove all Things: Hold fast that which is good:*

good: That is to say, that which is agreeable to the Will of God.

First then, It is the Duty of every Man to search, examine, and inquire into Matters of Religion, until such Time as he finds it *proved*, to the Satisfaction of his Conscience, what the Will of God is, which he stands obliged to perform and fulfil. And that this is so, there will need no other Argument to prove but this alone, that it is God's Command to every Man thus to do. Which will manifestly appear both from Reason and *Holy Scripture*.

First, From *Reason*. Man is a rational Creature, endowed with Understanding, whereby we are enabled to, distinguish between good and evil, that we may approve and choose the one, and reject and disapprove the other. As then St. Paul puts this Question, *Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* That is to say, from the Hand of God: 1 Cor. iv. 7. So let us in like manner demand from our selves, who made us to differ from the Beasts that perish? Who *breathed into Man's Nostrils the Breath of Life*, whereby *Man is become a living Soul*? Gen. ii. 7. Who is it that has given us Reason and Understanding, whereby we are more distinguished from Brute Animals than by our bodily Shape? Is not all this owing intirely to the good Will and Pleasure of our great Creator?

For what End and Purpose then has God made us *rational Creatures*? Is it only that

we should employ our *Reason* about the short and transitory Things of this World, and that we should struggle and contend with one another about them? Has not he made us capable of looking up to him that created us? Of honouring, adoring, and worshipping him, and of enquiring into his holy Will? And is not this a plain Command, signified to us by our own *Reason*, that we should accordingly so do? In a Word, that Man must wholly lay aside his *Reason*, who does not think it his Duty to employ it in inquiring after the Will of God, to the intent that he may perform it; wherein all Religion intirely consists.

And therefore St. *Paul* pronounces the Heathen World to be *without Excuse*; because *that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.* They had some competent Knowledge of God even by their own natural Reason: *Because* (as the Apostle speaks) *That which may be made known of God was manifested in them: For God had shewed it unto them. For the invisible Things of him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead, Rom. i. 19, 20.* But the Heathens did not improve this Knowledge, as they ought to have done, to the Glory of God. They did not carefully enquire after the Will of God; in which sober Reason would have guided them a great Way; but became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Hearts

Heart was darkned : As it immediately follows.

Thus we may see that *Reason*, of itself, teaches it to be God's Command that we should diligently enquire after his Will : And the same thing is also enforced upon us by the *Holy Scriptures*. What can be more plain to this purpose than the Words of my Text? *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* Thus also speaks St. *John*, 1 Joh. 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits whether they are of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.* And accordingly the Church of *Ephesus* is commended for trying them which said they were *Apostles* and were not, and finding them *Lyars*. Rev. 2. 2. *Search the Scriptures: For in them ye think ye have eternal Life,* says Christ, *Joh. 5. 39.* And the *Bereans* are approved of for not taking their Religion blindly upon trust, but searching the *Scriptures* daily whether those things were so. Act. 17. 11. Our Blessed Saviour puts all Men upon judging for themselves (which always presupposes a proper Enquiry) *Yea and why even of your selves judge ye not what is right?* Luk. 12. 57. And, to add no more Proofs from *Scripture* in so plain a Case, St. *Peter* directs all Christians to be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh them a Reason of the Hope that is in them, 1 Pet. 3. 15. Which it is impossible for any Man to do, except he first makes a serious Enquiry into the

Will of God, and the Truth of Religion.

Having thus plainly, both from *Reason* and *Scripture*, laid this great and fundamental Command of God before you, that we ought, every one of us, to search and enquire what his Will is; as a faithful Servant ought to do into that of his Master; let me add this one Consideration, that our Obedience to this Command is of the greatest Moment and Importance to each of us, that any thing can possibly be.

Our Blessed Saviour observes that when a Man intends to build a Tower he sits down first and counts the Cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it. Luk. 14. 28. Or if a King goes to make War against another King; he first consulteth whether he be able to meet him in the Field, v. 31. Indeed in all Matters of great Consequence, a Man of common Prudence will not fail to consider beforehand what is most proper to be done; lest, when it is too late, he should find himself disappointed in his Expectation, and perhaps very much damaged. Now what can possibly be of greater Consequence, Moment, or Importance to us all than to know the Will of God? Upon the due Performance of which the Peace of our Consciences here, and our eternal Happiness hereafter intirely depend. If then, in the momentary Affairs and Business of this World, we think our selves obliged to make the best Use of our Reason and Understanding

ing, that we may not be deceived to our Damage or Prejudice; certainly much more ought we so to do, when that which, of all things, is or ought to be most valuable to us, is in danger of being lost by our Neglect.

But here it is objected, that to make a full Enquiry into Religion, with the Grounds and Reasons of each Part of it, wherein the Will of God, with regard to us, is contained, is a Thing of great Difficulty, and not to be undertaken by any but a Man of Learning: And since upon this single Consideration the generality of the Church of *Rome* are perswaded to make no Enquiry at all into Religion, but to take it on Trust from their Church, or rather, most of them upon the Credit of their Priests, I think a clear and full Answer ought to be given to this Objection.

Let us then for the present suppose it to be very *Difficult* to make an enquiry into Religion: Is this a sufficient Reason for our not doing it, when God has commanded it? It is *difficult* for us, who carry Flesh and Blood about us, to keep our Passions in Subjection to Reason and Religion, and to mortify and subdue all our evil Inclinations; and yet there is no sober Man who does not own this to be his Duty. More *difficult* it would be to expose our selves to Persecution, and even to Death, for the Sake of Religion and a good Conscience: And yet if God, in his Providence, should call us to this, there is no sin-

cere Christian who will not acknowledge that he ought willingly to submit to it. *Difficulty* then is no just Excuse for our not obeying any Command of God; as I have shewn it to be that every Man should make diligent Enquiry into his Will, or into Matters of Religion, wherein it is contained.

But (at once to take off the whole Force of this Objection) it is very plain that a full and satisfactory Enquiry into Religion, as far as we are concerned to know it, is so far from being *difficult*, that it is very easy to be made by every one, even of a mean Capacity, who with moderate Diligence and Attention will set himself to it. And because this is a Point of the highest Importance, I shall crave your Patience, whilst I briefly set it in a full and clear Light.

The only End and Design of God, in making Religion known to Mankind, is that we might live holily here, and be eternally happy hereafter. *This is the Will of God, even your Sanctification.* 1 Thess. iv. 3. and *The Gospel of Christ is the Power of God unto Salvation,* Rom. i. 16. Whatever Doctrines then are advanced by any Men, under the Pretence of Religion; if they have no Tendency toward making us holy in this Life, or happy in that which is to come; Religion (properly speaking) is not at all concerned in them; nor is any Man obliged to enquire into the Truth of them. *Flee youthful Lusts; but follow after*
Righte-

Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart, says St. Paul: And all such Questions as have no Tendency hereunto; he brands with the Name of foolish and unlearned, and directs us to avoid them, knowing that they do gender Strifes, 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23.

Turn over that vast Multitude of great and small Volumes of controversial Divinity (as it is called) with which learned Men have troubled the Christian Church; and you will find them full fraught with barren Speculations, *Strifes of Words, (1 Tim. 6. 4.) which minister Questions rather than godly Edifying which is in Faith: To which Sort of Things the Apostle directs us not to give Heed, 1 Tim. i. 4.*

These are the Things which seem to perplex Religion, and to make it difficult to know *what the Will of the Lord is, (Eph. 5. 17.)* But if we lay them all at once aside, as *St. Paul* directs us; we may plainly see that all the Knowledge of Religion that is necessary to make us holy, and, in Consequence thereof, eternally happy, entirely consists in these three Things. First that we be fully perswaded of the Being of God; which is the first Principle and Foundation of all Religion: Secondly that we be convinced of the Truth of that Religion which was taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; without which we cannot be Christians: And thirdly, that we be rightly informed what it is which God requires from
us,

us, according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to our Salvation. *This is Life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, Joh. xvii. 3. He that is sufficiently instructed in these three Things, and leads his Life according to them, can want no Knowledge that is necessary to make him a good Christian, and to bring him to eternal Salvation. And all this Knowledge may easily be attained unto by every Man of a common Capacity, who will but a little seek after it. *Seek and ye shall find*, says Christ, Mat. vii. 7. But if a Man will not be at a little Trouble in *seeking*; how is it possible for him to find what he would have?

First then, it is easy for such a Man to arrive at a full Perswasion touching the Being of God. And indeed it is hard to suppose that any Man can look about him, or make the least Observation on the Structure of the whole World, and the many Sorts of Creatures contained in it, without being fully convinced of this great Truth.

Ask the most ignorant Man, who has not quite lost his Reason, who it was that made the *Clock*, which points out the Hour of the Day and Night to him? And he will readily tell you it was made by some *Clock-maker*; and that if there had not been such an *Artist* both to contrive and frame it, there never could have been any such Thing as a *Clock*.

Let

Let him, in like Manner, ask himself, who made the whole Universe, and every Thing therein? Who made the Sun, Moon, and Stars, to mark out for us the Day for Labour, the Night for Rest, and the several Seasons of the Year, for Tilling of the Ground and saving the Fruits of it? Who gave the Earth Power to bring forth Grass, Herbs and Trees for the use both of Man and Beast? Who placed the Earth at such an exact Distance from the Sun, as to be cherished by its Heat, and yet not burnt up by it? Who gives to all living Creatures power to receive the Nourishment fitted for them, and to propagate their Kind, that the Earth may not be laid waste and made desolate? Who gives unto Man a rational Soul, and endows him with proper Faculties, whereby to make use of the Creatures put within his Power for his Support and Comfort? And lastly, Who is it that, for so many thousand Years, has kept, and still does keep all these Things in that exact Order wherein they have so long continued? Many more plain Questions might be added to these: But if a Man seriously puts these alone to himself (which one of a mean Capacity may easily do) his own Reason must presently convince him that if so poor a Thing as a *Clock*, or any other Engine, could not be without an *Artist* to contrive and fashion it; much less could there be so glorious a Structure as the whole Universe (in every Part of which there is so much Art and Contrivance) if there were

not a most wise and powerful God to frame it, and put it in that Order wherein we find it. *The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work: Psal. 19, 1. And the invisible Things of him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead, Rom. 1. 20.*

Secondly, It is easy for a Man of a mean Capacity, with a little attentive Enquiry, to become well convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

The most illiterate Man who converses at all among his Neighbours, either does, or easily may, upon very good Grounds, believe many Things that are recorded in the Histories of past Times. Who (for Example) has the least Doubt but that there were such Persons as King *Henry* the Eighth, Queen *Elizabeth*, King *Charles* the First, and others, who sate upon the Throne of *England*? These Things are notorious, and no Man is so mad as to contradict them. Now what is or can be more notorious in all History than the Miracles of Jesus Christ and his Apostles? They healed Multitudes of sick People with a Word or a Touch; they gave Sight to the Blind, Hearing to the Deaf, and Strength and Agility to the Lame and Maimed. Christ Jesus walked upon the Water, and stilled the Tempest by his Command. He fed Multitudes with a very small Quantity

of

of Provision. He cast out Devils, restored the Dead to Life, and rose himself from the Dead the third Day after he had been crucified, and his Vitals pierced by a Spear. He conversed familiarly with his Disciples for forty Days after his Resurrection; and then was openly taken up into Heaven in their Sight; and soon after by sending the Holy Ghost upon them, he gave them Ability to speak all Languages; without which it had not been possible for them to preach the Gospel to all Nations.

All these Things, I say, are most notorious, and transmitted down to us in the History of the *New-Testament*, by a Multitude of as faithful and unexceptionable Witnesses as ever gave, or could give Testimony to the Truth of any Fact whatsoever: Witnesses who could not hope to gain any Thing by their Testimony, if it were false; and suffered all manner of Persecution, and even Death itself with exquisite Torments for adhering to it: Which is known to have been the Case of the Apostles, and very many of the first Disciples of our Blessed Saviour: Of all which it is most easy for every Man with a little Enquiry, fully to inform himself.

Is not this then enough to convince any Man, who will but think of it, that they who were enabled to work so very many Miracles for the Confirmation of the Doctrine which they taught, had most certainly
their

their Power and Authority from God? And consequently that the Religion, which was taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, is the true Religion? Our blessed Saviour appeals to the miraculous Works so often done by him. *Though ye believe not me (says he) believe the Works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him, Joh. 10. 38.*

And if to this we add that the Christian Religion, in every Part of it, is most pure and holy, and agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of God (which is manifestly the Case, and will sufficiently appear from the short Draught of it which, by and by, I shall have occasion to make) it will much strengthen the Argument, beyond any Pretence of an Answer.

Thirdly, It is easy for a Man of a common Capacity to get sufficient Information touching all that God, according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, requires from us in order to our Salvation.

Indeed if he resolves to perplex his Mind with those Niceties and Subtilties, those *foolish and unlearned Questions*, which I have shewn you St. Paul directs us to *avoid*, and *give no heed to*; he will soon bring himself into an inextricable Labyrinth. But the direct Way to Salvation is very plain to be understood; and the only Difficulty of it is to unmortified Flesh and Blood to put it in practice. Hear what St. Paul says touching this Matter, Rom. 10. 8.

Th

The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart; that is the Word of Faith which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. Always provided that the Course of thy Life be answerable to this Belief; which, by the whole Tenor both of the Law and the Gospel, is ever to be understood.

The ceremonial and judicial Laws of *Moses* were only given to the People of *Israel* (whom God had united into one civil, as well as sacred, Society) and are all of them now abolished under the Gospel. But God always did, and ever will, require, both from them and all other Nations, that they should strictly observe the Moral Law. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Says the Prophet *Micah*; Chap. 6. 8. *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter: Fear God, and keep his Commandments: For this is the whole Duty of Man*; says *Solomon*, Eccl. 12. 13. *In every Nation, he that feareth God and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him*; says *St. Peter*, Act. 10. 35.

St. Paul represents the Sum and Substance of all that is necessary to Salvation, in these few and plain Words: *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men: Teaching*

Teaching us that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present World : Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works, Tit. 2. 11. Certainly God, who is infinitely Wise and Good, has given the Blessing of Religion to us his Servants, not to puzzle or perplex us, but to guide and direct us in the Performance of our Duty ; if we will but give due Attention to it.

The whole Christian Religion is manifestly comprehended under these few Heads. “ To
 “ believe in one God, the Father, the Son,
 “ and the Holy Ghost ; in whose name Christ
 “ has commanded all who come into his
 “ Church to be baptized. To love God a-
 “ bove all Things ; and to shew our love of
 “ him, by keeping all his Commandments.
 “ To shew Love and good Will to all Man-
 “ kind, Friends, Strangers, and even Ene-
 “ mies, as far as we have Ability and Oppor-
 “ tunity for it. To be just and true, sober,
 “ patient, temperate and chaste in the whole
 “ Course of our Lives. To put our Trust
 “ in God’s Mercy, through the Death and
 “ Sufferings of Jesus Christ, for the Pardon
 “ of our Sins, upon our true Repentance.
 “ Often to commemorate the Death and
 “ Passion

" Passion of Christ, who dyed for our Sins,
 " by eating of that Bread and drinking of that
 " Cup, which he has appointed for that Pur-
 " pose. To live peaceably, quietly, and
 " contentedly amongst our Neighbours, and
 " obediently and submissively to our Supe-
 " riors. To sanctify the Lord's Day. To
 " worship God both publickly and privately,
 " and constantly to pray to him for the Grace
 " and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, to enable
 " us to perform every Part of our Duty : And,
 " in the Performance of all this, to hope for a
 " blessed Resurrection and eternal Salvation ;
 " not for any Merits of our own, but through
 " the Mercy of God, and the Mediation of
 " Jesus Christ our Blessed Saviour and Re-
 " deemer.

Too many there are and have been, who have
 mixed false or, at best, unnecessary Doctrines
 with their Religion : But this, which I have
 now recounted, is the Sum and Substance of
 the whole Christian Religion : And what is
 there in it all, that may not easily be known by
 every one who will but a little enquire into it ?
 Indeed I may almost ask, what Man is there,
 who converses among Christians, that does not
 know all this already ? (Excepting such as, by
 shutting up the Eyes of their Understanding,
 have made themselves wilfully blind) Altho'
 perhaps one who is illiterate may not be able
 well to express the Sense which he has of
 it. Well therefore may I conclude that it is
 easy

easy for a Man of a common Capacity to get sufficient Information touching all that God requires from us, under the Gospel, in order to our eternal Salvation.

It is indeed the Duty of every Man, according to his Ability, to improve his Notions of Religion, and to *grow in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ*, as St. Peter directs; 2 Pet. 3. 18. That, if possible, he may be qualified, *by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the Gain-sayers*, Tit. 1. 9. But a little Knowledge, if a Man can get no more, and conscientiously puts in practice what he knows, may be sufficient (through the Mercy of God) to bring him to Salvation.

Having thus sufficiently cleared up my first Proposition, and shewn it to be the Duty of every Man to make the best Enquiry he can into Religion and the Will of God; as also how easy this Task is, even to a Man of a mean Capacity, if he honestly sets himself to it: I shall have occasion to say but little touching my second Proposition, which was

That when a Man is convinced what the Will of God is, he ought to hold fast to it, and by no means to depart from it.

This is a Truth universally acknowledged by all Men who own the Being of God: And therefore needs no farther Proof. God is our Creator; our supreme Lord and Master. *His Will* alone we must stand or fall to all Eternity. As therefore it is our Duty to enquire

after it ; so is it both our Duty and Interest, when we have found it, to be obedient to it, and upon no account to depart from it. *Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith, without wavering. For he is faithful that promised,* says St. Paul, Heb. 10. 23. And *we ought to obey God rather than Men* ; say the Apostles, Acts 5. 29. And so will every other Man say ; although too many there are, who do not practise accordingly.

Let us now see what Use we ought to make of the Doctrine which I have thus established from my Text.

First then, what shall we say of those Men, who are careful to enquire into every other thing that concerns them, and yet never make any Enquiry at all into the Truth of their Religion ?

If a Man be about to make a Bargain, or to transact any worldly Business ; he commonly considers whether what he is going to do will be for his Benefit ; and whether he may do it with Safety. But although he owns that his eternal Happiness intirely depends upon the Truth of his Religion ; yet why he is of that Religion which he professes, rather than of another, he is able to give no good Reason.

One Sort of Men there is, who make it their avowed Profession never to search into the Grounds and Reasons of their Religion. But (say they) we believe as the Church believes, and we are safe. And if you ask them, how they

they know that their Church, upon which they depend, is the true Church, and that what they believe is as the Church believes? To this they have no other Answer to give, but that their Priests tell them so.

But, in the Affairs of this World, they will not rely upon the bare Credit and Authority of their Priests, who they well know may be mistaken; and why then should they do it when their eternal Salvation is at Stake? Why do not they consult their own Reason, and study the *Holy Scriptures*, until they are fully satisfied whether those Things which they learn from their Church, or rather from their Priests, are agreeable to the Will of God? No. They will not do this; but suffer themselves to be charmed and laid to sleep by the bare Name of *the Church*, altho' they know not what the Church is, and give themselves no farther Trouble about the Matter.

The *Holy Scriptures* are by all Christians owned as the Word of God: And in them (being faithfully translated into many Languages) particularly in those of the *New Testament*, the Life, Miracles, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ are plainly set forth, together with that Doctrine of Salvation which he commanded his Disciples to teach; and for the doing of which, he gave them the Gift of the Holy Ghost: And St. John expressly tells us that *These things are written that we might believe*

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have Life through his Name, Joh. 20. 31. What an Infatuation then is it for any Man, who calls himself a *Christian*, to suffer himself to be kept a Stranger to this holy Book?

Others there are, who, although they have full and free Liberty of *searching the Scriptures*, and enquiring into the Grounds and Reasons of Religion, yet grossly neglect to do it. *Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you; says St. Peter: 1 Pet. 3. 15.* But many there are, of both Sorts, who seek for no other Reason why they hope to be saved in the Religion which they profess, but only that thus they have been taught from their Infancy: Which Reason may as well be urged by a Turk or an Heathen as by them.

I have shewn it to be a Duty of the greatest Importance to every Man, that he should search and enquire into Religion and the Grounds of it; and also that this may be done, with very good Success, by every Man even of a mean Capacity, who will but set himself to it with the same Care and Attention as he does to his worldly Business. That Man, therefore, who neglects so to do, is for ever left without any manner of Excuse.

Secondly, What shall we say of those Men, who have indeed a competent Knowledge of
Re-

Religion ; but yet do not form their Lives according to what they very well know ?

Nothing can be plainer than that God requires from us all, that we should be *zealous of good Works*, diligent in the Practice of Piety, Justice, Charity, Compassion, Truth, Sobriety, Temperance, Modesty, Chastity in our Words and Actions, and every other Christian Vertue. Of all this none of us can pretend to be ignorant ; and yet how many are there, who in their Practice are the very Reverse of it ? Who never set themselves to *hold fast that which they know is good*, and most agreeable to the Will of God ? as my Text directs us all to do. These Men are self-condemned, and therefore it is in vain to dispute with them. For, as our blessed Saviour says, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*, (Luk. 16. 31.) So may we say, that if a Man will not hearken to the Dictates of his own Conscience, neither will he regard what any other Man says to him.

But such Men ought to remember, that Christ has expressly told us that *That Servant who knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes*, Luk. 12. 47. O that they were wise, that they understood this ; that they would consider their latter End ! as God, by Moses, says to the People of Israel, Deut. 32. 29

Lastly

Lastly, The Doctrine of my Text may be of great Use to us, when Men endeavour to perplex our Minds by attempting to persuade us that diverse things are necessary to Salvation, which really are not so.

For Example; The Church of *Rome* with great Assurance tells us that we cannot be saved, except we receive all those *Additions* which she (without any Authority but her own) has presumed to make to the Christian Religion. If a Man be convinced of the Truth of a Doctrine, he cannot but give his Assent to it: But if he be not so convinced, it is impossible he should believe it, whatever he may pretend; and God requires Impossibilities from no Man.

My Text directs us that, when we have proved all things, we should hold fast that which is good. That is to say, whatever is conformable to the Will of God, whatever he has commanded and requires from us (the Sum and Substance of all which I have but now set before you) all this we ought to hold fast, and lead our Lives according to it, without bewildring ourselves with those things which are above our Capacity.

The Church of *Rome* takes very much upon herself, and Men of real or pretended Learning have advanced many Opinions of their own: But God alone, who is the sole Author and Giver of Salvation, has Power to prescribe the Conditions of it: And if we honestly and sin-

cerely perform what God has commanded (all which, I have shewn you, it is easy for every Man to learn) we are safe.

The Apostles of Christ themselves *had no Dominion over the Faith of Christians*, 2 Cor. 1. 24. *I have not spoken of my self* (says Jesus Christ) *but the Father which sent me, he gave me a Commandment what I should say, and what I should speak; and I know that his Commandment is Life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak*, Joh. 12. 49, 50. In like manner, Christ sent his Apostles to teach Men to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them, Matt. 28. 20. The Apostles were faithful Stewards of this Trust committed to them, 1 Cor. 4. 2. Wherever they preached the Gospel, they kept back nothing that was profitable, Acts 20. 20. but declared all the Counsel of God, v. 27. Nor did they expect that what they taught should be received because it was the Doctrine of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or any other Apostle, but purely and only because it was the Doctrine of Christ, 1 Cor. 1. 12. For *Who is Paul, and Who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believed?* chap. 3. 5. And when once the Apostles had preached the Gospel; *If they themselves, or an Angel from Heaven should have taught any other thing, as Gospel, than that which they had preached; let him be accursed;* says St. Paul: Gal. 2. 8. Nor have we any authentick Account

of what the Apostles taught or preached, except the *Holy Scriptures*: All this is most plain.

If therefore the *Romanists* would have us receive their Doctrines of Transubstantiation, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the giving Divine Worship to the Host, the Communion under one Kind alone, the Invocation of Saints, the worshipping of Images and Relicks, Purgatory, the Pope's Supremacy, and all the rest of their Errors: If (I say) they would have us receive all these things as necessary to Salvation; it is incumbent on them to prove, First, That all these Doctrines were taught by the Apostles; and Secondly, That God requires the Belief of them from us. Neither of these Points is pretended to be proved from the Principles of Natural Reason: And therefore if they take upon them any other way to prove them, it must be either from *Holy Scripture* (in which they most notoriously fail) or from some new Revelation made by God; of which they ought to give a sufficient Account, if they expect that we should believe them.

I shall conclude with a Repetition of those most divine Words of St. Paul, which I have once already mentioned, and ought to be deeply imprinted upon the Heart of every Christian: Tit. 2. 11. *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men, teaching us that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present*

present World; Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. This we are sure is all good, and agreeable to the Will of God. In the Name of God then, let us Prove, Approve, hold it fast, and bring forth the Fruit of it in the whole Course of our Lives, to the Glory of God, and our own eternal Salvation, through the same our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

F I N I S.

